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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SSM-03
AID-05 IO-13 OES-07 IGA-02 /080 W
----------241633Z 023093 /43
O R 241500Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6292
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS
SUBJECT: SUCCESSOR TO BEGIN?

1. FORMAL DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE LIKUD AND THE DMC ON A NEW COALITION BEGAN TODAY. THE DMC IS REPRESENTED BY YIGAEL YADIN AND THE OTHER TOP NAMES ON ITS KNESSET LIST. THE LIKUD TEAM IS HEADED BY EZER WEIZMAN, SIMCHA EHRLICH, YITZHAK SHAMIR, ARYE DULZIN AND YIGAL HOROWITZ. THE CONSPICUOUS ABSENTEE IS MENAHEM BEGIN WHO REMAINS IN A TEL AVIV HOSPITAL UNDER OBSERVATION. ALTHOUGH DOCTORS DENY THAT HE HAD SUFFERED ANOTHER HEART ATTACK AND MAINTAIN THAT HE IS FEELING WELL AND WILL BE RELEASED IN A FEW DAYS (ASSURANCES GIVEN PERSONALLY TO AN EMBOFF YESTERDAY BY BEGIN'S PHYSICIAN), SPECULATION HAS INEVITABLY ARISEN ON A POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR. HOWEVER, LIKUD LEADERS REFUSE TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT PUBLICLY AND SEEM RELUCTANT TO APPROACH THE QUESTION IN PRIVATE.
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2. A MAJOR CRISIS IS SEEN SHOULD BEGIN LEAVE THE SECENE. ASIDE FROM BEGIN, THE PARTY IS NOTABLE FOR ITS PAUCITY OF PTOENTIAL LEADERS OF FIRST RANK. THERE IS NO OBVIOUS HEIR-APPARENT RECOGNIZED BY THE PARTY OR ACCEPTED BY THE PUBLIC. NO ONE IN THE LIKUD ENJOYS THE ADULATION THAT HERUT

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ADHERENTS ACCORD BEGIN (ESPECIALLY NOTICEABLE
AMONG LOWER CLASS "ORIENTAL"COMMUNITIES) OR
THE RESPECT THAT BEGIN RECEIVES FROM FRIEND AND
FOE ALIKE IN ISRAEL'S BODY POLITIC.

3. IN THE ABSENCE OF BEGIN, WEIZMAN APPEARS TO
BE IN CHARGE. HE IS GIVEN FULL CREDIT FOR
MANAGING THE LIKUD'S SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN AND IS
PRESENTLY THE UNDISPUTED NUMBER TWO IN HERUT.
ALTHOUGH THE RANK ORDER IN THE LIKUD BETWEEN HIM
AND LIBERAL LEADER ERHLICH IS UNCLEAR, MOST
REGARD HERUT AS THE SENIOR PARTNER IN THE
LIKUD BLOC AND, THEREFORE, SEE WEIZMAN EMERGING
ON TOP IN THE EVENT OF A CONTEST TO SUCCEED BEGIN.
THIS IMPRESSION IS REINFORCED BY REPORTS THAT
EHRLICH IS NOT AMBITIOUS TO BECOME PRIME MINISTER.

4. HOWEVER, WEIZMAN HAS SERIOUS HANDICAPS WHICH
ARE GENERALLY RECOGNIZED. IF BEGIN IS SEEN AS
HARDLINE, INFLEXIBLE AND UNREALISTIC, WEIZMAN IS
SEEN AS ALL THESE THINGS PLUS INTEMPERATE,
IRRESPONSIBLE AND UNPREDICTABLE. HAVING GREAT
CONFIDENCE IN HIS ABILITIES AND JUDGMENTS, HE
TENDS TO SHOOT FROM THE HIP. (IT MUST BE ADDED THAT
MANY OF HIS SHOTS ARE ON TARGET. SOME SAY HE WAS
THE ONLY MAJOR LIKUD FIGURE TO BELIEVE IN THE
LIKUD CAMPAIGN SLOGAN, "WE'RE GOING TO BE NUMBER
ONE.").

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5. EVEN IF RESTORED TO HEALTH, OBSERVERS ARE
QUESTIONING WHETHER BEGIN'S LEADERSHIP CAN EVER
BE THE SAME. HAVING SUFFERED A RELAPSE FROM A
SERIOUS HEART ATTACK PLUS PNEUMONIA JUST TWO MONTHS AGO HIS
HEALTH WILL REMAIN AN EVER PRESENT FACTOR IN THE
POLITICAL CRISES WHICH ARE SURE TO ARISE. HIS
EFFECTIVENESS AND GRASP OF SITUATIONS MAY
BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY WHAT MAY DEVELOP AS A
TENDENCY BY HIS LIEUTENANTS TO CUSHION HIM FROM
UNPLEASANTNESS. MEANWHILE, WITH COALITION TALKS
UNDERWAY, THE GENERAL EXPECTATION REMAINS THAT
BEGIN WILL SERVE AS PRIME MINISTER. HIS ILLNESS,
HOWEVER, HAS INTRODUCED A DECIDED NOTE OF
UNCERTAINTY AND MAY ACT AS A BRAKE ON THE NEGOTIA-
TIONS. IT COULD ALSO REVIVE SPECULATION ON YADIN
AS PRIME MINISTER. SUCH AN OFFER WOULD BE AN
IRRESISTIBLE INDUCEMENT TO THE DMC TO COME INTO
THE COALITION, IF ALL ELSE FAILS, AND COULD BE
A DEMAND THE PUBLIC WOULD PUSH IF BEGIN WERE TO

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LEAVE THE SCENE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
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Concepts: POLITICAL PARTIES, PARTY LEADERS, PARTY ALLIANCE, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 24-May-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS, (BEGIN, MENAHEM), (WEIZMAN, EZER), (YADIN, YIGAL)
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